

St Mary's College, St Andrews, in the Eighteenth Century

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St Mary's College was unique during the eighteenth century: it was the only college in the British Isles which was wholly concerned with the teaching of theology. Its academic staff never amounted to more than four at any one time and sometimes to less. This paper is concerned with their relationships with each other and with their students.

1 After the Revolution: the Hadow Era

The Principal of St Mary's at the time of the Revolution was James Lorimer who had been promoted from the Second Master's place in 1687.¹ He is frequently referred to during the eighteenth century, not because of his teaching or theology but because of his petition to the University Visitation of 1687 on the subject of Diet-money. Lorimer represented to the Visitors that the Masters of the College were entitled by the terms of the foundation to full diet throughout the year and were also allowed the diet of a servant to attend them. Of late, however, the Principal and Second Master had been "restricted to one diet, viz. dinner only, and nothing allowed for their servants". This had been done to augment the College revenues but had also been "to the great prejudice of that care and diligence which is required for the governing and instructing of youth, the morning and evening hours of their attendance being that which should most narrowly be looked into". Lorimer assured the Visitors that the revenues of the College were now sufficient to bear the allowance of full diet to the said two masters and their servants and petitioned for an allowance of forty-eight pounds Scots the quarter for the Masters and such allowance for their servants as the Visitors might see fit.

The petition was granted on condition that only the old rents of the College were used and "no ways the money found to belong as a stock to the said College nor the rents of the lands purchased for the provision of the third Master in the said College".² This may refer to the accumulated revenues of the Profession of Hebrew and Oriental Languages to which no Master had yet been appointed. A certain Patrick Gordon was appointed "Professor of the Oriental

¹ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland [RCP]*, 3rd series, xiii, p. xviii.

² *Evidence . . . for visiting the Universities of Scotland*, 4 vols. (London, 1837), iii, 373.

Tongues and Third Master” in 1688 but apparently received little or no income, for in 1692 he received a warrant authorising the College Factor to pay him a salary out of the College revenues.³ A Second Master, John Menzies, was also appointed in 1688 but was deprived and imprisoned after the Revolution.⁴ Lorimer was also deprived and died soon afterwards.⁵

Not surprisingly the new appointments were made from the ranks of those who had suffered in the Covenanting cause. William Vilant, Lorimer’s successor, had twice been “outed” from his parish for refusing to co-operate with the authorities. He had been educated at St Andrews where he had been nicknamed “the singed cat” by James Wood, apparently in allusion to the proverb, “He is like a singed cat, he is better than he is bonnie.” His principalship was a brief one (1691-93) and, according to the historian Wodrow, “he died so soon that he never got any public praelection made”.⁶ His successor, Alexander Pitcairn, was translated from the Provostship of St Salvator’s and is described by Wodrow as “an eye-sore to the Episcopal Clergy” and “known throughout the reformed churches by his writings”.⁷ Soon after Pitcairn’s death in 1695, John Syme, a student of Divinity, was appointed by the king and queen as the second incumbent of the profession of Hebrew and Oriental Languages.⁸ A former Conventicle preacher, Thomas Forrester, was appointed Principal in 1698. Predictably, he was the author of several anti-prelatical tracts, including *The Hierarchical Bishop’s Claim to a Divine Right tried at the Scripture Bar*.⁹ In 1699 an appointment was at last made to the Second Master’s place with the translation of James Hadow from Cupar and thus began his family’s long association with the College.

Soon after their appointment, Forrester and Hadow made inquiries into the rents of the College and found that surpluses caused by the vacancies had been largely disposed of by the Commissioners of the Treasury by making grants to the two Professors of Hebrew, Patrick Gordon and John Syme and to a Dr Skene who was not a member of the College at all. To prevent any

³ St Andrews University Library, College Muniments, SM 110, 19, 1.

⁴ *RPC*, xiii, p. xxi; xiv, 12f.

⁵ *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, ed. H. Scott, 10 vols. (Edinburgh, 1915-81), vii, 420ff.

⁶ R. Wodrow, *Analecta*, ed. M. Leishman, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1842-43), iii, 57.

⁷ R. Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution* (Glasgow, 1829), iii, 390f. Pitcairn’s works were published in London and Rotterdam as well as Edinburgh.

⁸ College Muniments, SM 110, 19, 1.

⁹ Published Edinburgh, 1699. He had previously written *Rectuis Instruendum* 1684 and continued the controversy with *Causa Episcopatus Hierarchici Lucifuga*, Edinburgh, 1706.

more of the surplus being disposed of they resolved to provide lodgings for themselves and their successors. In 1702 a house near the College was bought for the Principal. Some time afterwards a lodging for the Second Master or Professor of Divinity, as he came to be known, was prepared in the north-west corner of the College court. Hadow settled in this house and continued to occupy it when he became Principal in 1707 and it thus became the official residence of the Principal until it was vacated in 1976. The house in South Street then became the residence of the Professors of Divinity until 1785 when it was sold.¹⁰ No similar lodgings were provided for the other professors, a cause of grievance for some considerable time.

In a statement made to the Royal Visitation of 1718, Hadow was at pains to emphasize that the creation of his house in the quadrangle had left plenty of accommodation for the students. There were still twenty bedrooms and twenty-four closets and more might be repaired if needful.¹¹ Clearly, not all the students were accommodated in the College for in 1702 there were fifty-one matriculated. Numbers rose to fifty-seven in 1706 but fell to eighteen in 1715, and in 1718 had risen to twenty-five.¹² The eight foundation bursars and the holder of the Moncrieff bursary were entitled to sit at the College table for four sessions.¹³ The oldest Diet-book of the College notes that “on Thursday 1 December 1698 the New Colledge table satt down” and records the purchases and daily consumption of beef, mutton, ale, wheaten bread and oat bread until 20 May 1699.¹⁴

It is difficult to determine how many students were actually in attendance at classes for the practice of partial attendance after matriculation had grown up by this time. In some cases this meant no attendance at all and so the General Assembly gave increasing attention at this period to qualifications for the Licence to preach. Act XXII of 1696 required “that none be licensed to preach or ordained to the ministry unless they give good proof of their understanding the Greek and Hebrew”. The same Act recommended the study of Chaldee and Syriac and that candidates for Licence be “tried not only in the great controversies of religion but also in the controversies concerning the government and discipline of the Church”. Act X of 1711 appointed that “none be admitted to trials in order to be licensed but such as have attended the profession of Divinity for six years” but went on to make

¹⁰ *Evidence*, iii, 369, 404. College Muniments, SM 400; ii, 322.

¹¹ *Evidence*, iii, 369.

¹² College Muniments, SM 310.

¹³ *Evidence*, iii, 394f.

¹⁴ College Muniments, SM 110 Supp. 99.

provision for those “whose circumstances did not allow them to attend the profession”. They had to produce evidence of private study of Divinity and the languages for six years after the completion of the Philosophy course, though attendance at Divinity classes for part of the time was desirable.¹⁵

Lists of students matriculated at St Mary’s from 1698 to 1741 with notes about the various exercises they were set have been preserved in the College muniments. These include homilies, lectures, exegeses and discourses on topics such as Pietas, Submissio, Cognitio Dei, Vigilantia, Fides, Timor, Charitas, Gaudium, Providentia, Fortitudo, to quote those set in 1701. In each list there are names to which no exercises are credited, presumably those who gave only partial attendance.¹⁶

In 1707 the teaching establishment took the form it was to retain until 1934 for in that year the Third Master’s place was endowed as a Profession of Ecclesiastical History by diverting the income of six of nine bursaries which had been founded by King William in 1693. Patrick Haldane was presented to the new Profession by Queen Anne and explicitly given the right of being eligible for election as Rector.¹⁷ When Hadow was presented to the Principalship in 1707 he had no successor as Professor of Divinity until 1710 when Thomas Halyburton was appointed. Halyburton’s tenure was cut short by his premature death two years later at the age of thirty-seven. He is remembered chiefly for his devotional memoirs, which his wife published in 1715.¹⁸ So many candidates were proposed for the vacant profession of Divinity that a regent in St Salvator’s College, Alexander Scrimgeour, was given his opportunity “to make his merkat the better at Court”. He was presented by Queen Anne in 1713 and this began a long controversy for besides being a layman Scrimgeour was known to be an Episcopalian who never attended Presbyterian services. The Act of 1707 “for securing the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government” and made it a condition of admission to office of all “Professors, Principals, Regents, Masters or others bearing office in any University Colledge or School within this Kingdom” that they subscribe the Westminster Profession of Faith and acknowledge the Presbyterian government and discipline of the Church before the Presbytery of the bounds. The Provost of St Salvator’s College, Robert Ramsay, who was Rector of the University, supported Scrimgeour and despite Principal Hadow’s

¹⁵ *Acts of the General Assembly . . . 1638-1842* (Edinburgh, 1843), 254, 453.

¹⁶ College Muniments, SM 310.

¹⁷ *Evidence*, iii, 372. College Muniments, SM 110.

¹⁸ *Memoirs* (Edinburgh, 1715; Glasgow, 1730; Edinburgh, 1848, etc.); George Whitefield and John Wesley issued an abstract, 1728-29.

protests the university voted to admit Scrimgeour, thus beginning a long conflict with the courts of the Church.

The Duke of Atholl who was Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly as well as chancellor of the university undertook to inform the queen of the controversy and discovered that her Majesty had been under the impression that Scrimgeour was a minister of the Established Church. Atholl was authorised by the queen to offer Scrimgeour a pension equal to the salary he would have as Professor of Divinity if he would resign the presentation but apparently Scrimgeour refused. The controversy was still raging in 1727 when it was suggested that Scrimgeour might be presented to the vacant profession of Ecclesiastical History. Wodrow comments: "The sellarys are near equal and its thought he will yeild and hoped he can do little hurt in teaching history".¹⁹

Controversy also surrounded the Professors of Hebrew and Oriental Languages. The original endowment of £50 annually was quite insufficient and was hardly ever paid after the Revolution. £25 was allocated to the Professor out of a grant by King William in 1693.²⁰ Consternation was caused in 1707 when Queen Anne granted to John Syme the rents which had been purchased by the College with the vacant salary payments of the Restoration period along with table rights and accommodation in the College.²¹ Hadow was convinced that the College would be ruined and campaigned vigorously for the revocation of Syme's grant.²² Apparently he was unsuccessful for he and Halyburton had to concede the new rents to Syme by a contract made in 1711. Contracts made with Syme's successors, Gabriel Johnstone and Hugh Warrender, were much more favourable to the College which was to receive new rents and to pay £50 annually to the Professor of Hebrew.²³ Warrender's successor, Thomas Craigie, complains, "My Predecessors seem to have had more ambitious views but as I consider my present settlement as what probably to me may be one for life I beg to be excused for wishing and endeavouring to have it made as good as I can by all fair and honest methods".²⁴ As it happens, neither Craigie nor his predecessors died in office. Johnstone became Governor of North Carolina, Warrender took up the study of Civil and Canon Law and Craigie became Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow.²⁵

The other major internal problem which Hadow confronted was

¹⁹ Wodrow, *Analecta*, ii, 197f; iii, 409f.

²⁰ *Evidence*, iii, 372.

²¹ College Muniments, SM 110, 19, 1.

²² *Ibid.*, SM 200.

²³ *Ibid.*, SM 110, 19, 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Fasti*, vii, 426.

caused by a serious fire in the College in 1727. A contemporary statement runs as follows: "Upon the 17th current betwixt three and four in the morning a dreadful fire broke out in the New College here whereby the south part of it's Fabrick is ruined. And the Damages according to an Estimate made by six Tradesmen at the appointment of the Masters of the University amounts to £6108 Scots. In deliberating upon Ways and Means for repairing these Damages one year's salary of the Profession of Church History in tha College (vacant by the death of Mr. James Haldane, who perished in the Burning) was thought of as a proper Fund to help forward the Reparations if his Majesties Grant thereof could be obtained."²⁶ The unfortunate James Haldane, whose death is thus relegated to a parenthesis, was a kinsman of the first Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Patrick Haldane, who had resigned in 1718 to devote his energies to a political career which included being Provost of St Andrews and M.P. for the Perth Burghs.²⁷ James Haldane was not admitted as professor until 1721 and being a bachelor lodged in the south wing of the Hamilton building. His place remained unfilled until 1730 and the vacant salary, supplemented by a grant from the Bishop's rents of Scotland, was used to pay for extensive repairs to the College.²⁸

The internal problems of the College did not prevent Hadow from taking an active part in the affairs of the Church at large. As well as opposing Scrimgeour he wrote two pamphlets against the Episcopal clergy. In answer to the Deists he prepared for publication Halyburton's *Natural Religion Insufficient and Revealed Necessary to Man's Happiness in his present state*. He was also deeply involved in the proceedings against John Simson, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, who was accused first of Arminianism and then of Arianism. But he is chiefly remembered for his denunciation of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*.

The *Marrow* was the work of an English Puritan divine of the seventeenth century.²⁹ It was re-published in 1718 by James Hog, minister of Carnock, in an attempt to counter the current spread of legalistic doctrine. Hadow considered the *Marrow* to be antinomian and in a sermon before the Synod of Fife in April 1719 he alleged that it was inconsistent with Scripture and the Confession of Faith.³⁰ He was one of the prime movers in getting the *Marrow* condemned by the General Assembly of 1720.³¹

²⁶ College Muniments, SM 110, 19, 1.

²⁷ *Fasti*, ii, 431.

²⁸ College Muniments, SM 500, 4.

²⁹ Usually identified as Edward Fisher.

³⁰ *The Record of God and the Duty of Faith*. In 1721 he published *The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity detected*.

³¹ Act X, 1720, *Acts of Assembly 1638-1843*, 534-36.

Later in his principalship Hadow had an alleged heretic as colleague in the person of Archibald Campbell, who was presented to the profession of Ecclesiastical History in somewhat peculiar circumstances in 1730. Campbell, who was minister of Larbert, had written an *Enquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue* but one of his friends had taken the manuscript to London and had published it receiving in recognition of this a benefice in England worth £200 a year. When the true authorship became known Campbell was presented to the St Mary's profession by way of compensation.³² About this time Campbell published a *Discourse proving that the Apostles were no Enthusiasts*. Enthusiast was a pejorative term then, and Campbell was anxious to disabuse his contemporaries of "an idle fancy they have taken up concerning the Apostles as if they were only a company of poor deluded creatures". His writings attracted unfavourable comment in various courts of the Church and were reported on to the General Assembly of 1736. The General Assembly passed no judgement on Campbell's writings but recommended him and "all ministers and teachers of Divinity whatsoever within this National Church to be cautious in their preaching and teaching or writing, not to use doubtful expressions or propositions which may be constructed in an erroneous sense".³³

Later that year Campbell was responsible for beginning an internal controversy that was to vex the College for half a century. He pointed out to the other Masters that the salary of the Profession of Ecclesiastical History had been allocated during the vacancy to the repair of the College buildings but that the accommodation occupied by his predecessor had still not been put in order and was in any case inadequate for him and his family. It was therefore agreed that he should receive a yearly allowance of £100 Scots for the rent of a house.³⁴

Campbell was also able to get for himself and for the Professor of Hebrew an allowance of Diet money. There is preserved in the College muniments a lengthy minute dated 1st June 1742 and signed by all four Masters which deals with this contentious matter. Reference was made to Lorimer's petition of 1687 but it was agreed that all four Masters should receive allowances instead of only the Principal and Second Master. The Principal was to receive £296 Scots per annum and the other three £240 Scots per annum. Five years later the rate was fixed at £296 Scots for all the Masters. This was done shortly after Principal Hadow's death and one of the first acts of the new Principal, James Murison, was to dissent from this

³² Wodrow, *Analecta*, iv, 181f, 241, 243.

³³ *Acts of Assembly 1638-1843*, 639.

³⁴ College Minutes, SM 400, i, 2.

decision.³⁵ Murison's thirty-two years at St Mary's are marked by a good deal of internal controversy, much of it caused by James Hadow's son, George, who became Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages in 1748.

George Hadow had a large family and so did not live in the College but in 1751 he succeeded in getting a rent allowance of £100 Scots per annum.³⁶ However, he insisted on retaining the room in the College which his predecessors had occupied, to the great annoyance of his colleagues who wanted to use it to extend the accommodation for students. He was ordered in 1757 to vacate the room but was apparently still in possession in 1773. When he still refused to hand over the key Murison ordered a tradesman to break down the door but Hadow obtained a bill of suspension to prevent the break-in and then refused to allow College funds to be used for the legal proceedings which followed.³⁷

Hadow found an ally in William Brown who was presented to the profession of Ecclesiastical History shortly after the death of Archibald Campbell. Brown was a picaresque character sometimes known as General Brown because he had rescued some army officers who were being held prisoner at Glamis by the Jacobites in 1746. His settlement at St Andrews was bitterly fought by the University and only after an interlocutor from the Court of Session was his admission carried out by Principal Tullideph in the presence of Hadow and one other member of the University.³⁸ Murison and Andrew Shaw, Professor of Divinity 1739-79, strongly opposed Brown and refused him the allowances made to Campbell on the grounds that the Professor of Ecclesiastical History was not a foundation member of the College.³⁹ Brown and Hadow retaliated by refusing to attest the College accounts because they included the payment of window tax in respect of the houses occupied by Murison and Shaw.⁴⁰ When the College law agent in Edinburgh went bankrupt Hadow found yet another stick with which to beat Murison, alleging that the Principal should have been aware of the firm's shaky financial state.⁴¹

Educational matters do not bulk largely in the College minutes during Murison's time. There is a great deal about the buying and leasing of property and much controversy about property leased by Hadow who ran a small farm to support his family.⁴² However,

³⁵ College Minutes, SM 400, i, 12-14; *Evidence*, iii, 373-75.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, SM 400, i, 17f.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 31f, 305, 314f, 338f.

³⁸ College Muniments, SM 110, 19, 2.

³⁹ College Minutes, SM 400, i, 35f.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 139-54.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, i, 18f.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.

one of the historians of the university has commended the prudent manner in which the Masters of St Mary's bought up one by one the row of houses, malt barns, courts and gardens that lined West Burn lane thus straightening the College boundary and acquiring property which proved of inestimable value to the university in later years.⁴³

The College sold its right of patronage of the parish of Tynninghame to the earl of Haddington for £100 sterling in 1760,⁴⁴ but it remained patron for the parishes of Conveth (Laurencekirk), Inchbrayock (Craig) and Tannadice and at alternate vacancies for Logie-Pert. The minutes record the steps taken to fill vacancies, often in consultation with the heritors and elders of the parish and sometimes giving preference to former students of the College.⁴⁵

The minutes also record disciplinary matters. In February 1762 some students were extruded for drunken misbehaviour including the breaking of windows but they were readmitted a month later. The incident led to a re-formulation of the College rules, the first of several during Murison's principalship. The rules are prefaced by an injunction to "shun even the appearance of evil" and this phrase remains in every revision until 1957. The rules of 1762 required all students who lodged in the College to be within the gates by 9 o'clock at night. All students were to attend prayers in the College at 9 o'clock in the morning and 7 o'clock at night. The student who officiated at table was during his week to keep an exact list of those who failed in this duty and give it to the Principal the following Monday. In 1763 detailed instructions were given about Sunday worship. The students were to assemble in the College area at the ringing of the College bell and thence to go in a body under the Principal's supervision to the College loft in the town church forenoon and afternoon.⁴⁶

In 1766 the Principal and Masters noted that most of the students attending the College were lodging in the town. They pointed out that the apartments in the College had recently been repaired and strongly recommended the students to take up their lodgings in them. They also ordered the porter to cease the practice of taking breakfast to the bursars who lived outside the College. As a further inducement, it was decided that each student should pay the porter 7s 6d sterling whether he lived in the College or not.⁴⁷

In 1769 the Principal and Masters were concerned about the

⁴³ J. M. Anderson, *Handbook to the City and University of St Andrews* (St Andrews, 1911), 74f.

⁴⁴ College Minutes, SM 400, i, 67f, 70-72.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 58, 63-65, 169, 206.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 91-93, 94-97.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 164f.

regularity of students' attendance at College. No student was to leave town without the Principal's permission and those who ate in College had to inform the porter about the times of departure and return. Each student was to be punctual in attending on the first Monday of December and not to delay until later in the session.⁴⁸

The students were scarcely less stringent in the regulations which they drew up for themselves, if the rules of the Theological Society founded in 1760 are any guide. Several related to the conduct of members. The fine for absence from a meeting was four pence and lateness was assessed at a penny for each half-hour. A fine of a penny was also payable by a member who interrupted another while speaking, or laughed or made another laugh, or spoke privately during the debate to another member. Expulsion was to be the punishment for any member who disclosed anything about the proceedings of the society.⁴⁹

There is no statement about the objects of the Society. The first rule simply enacted that "The members shall give discourses in their turn according to the alphabetical order of their names, which discourses shall serve as the subject of disputation, each of them for one or more nights as the Club shall see reason". There was no President but the second rule stated that "The member that gives the discourse shall be Praeses of course next night . . . and the Praeses shall constitute the meeting by putting on his hat and calling, Silence." A clerk was appointed "to keep the Rules, to mark, receive and keep the fines, to set down the Questions and the name of the proposer and whatever else the Praeses may see fit". Little information is provided about the subjects of the earliest discussions but the clerk reports that during 1762 the debates turned wholly upon questions in Natural Religion or the Evidence of Christianity. The first minute of a meeting reads as follows: "Thursday 29th Decr. 1763. Mr. Young Praeses. Mr. Robertson read a discourse on this Question: Are there any objects in Nature beautiful per se? He maintained the Affirmative." Subsequent minutes preserve this laconic style but it is clear that all the speakers were members of the Society. In 1766 it was agreed that a maximum of three "visitants" might be brought in any one night, one by the Praeses, one by the member giving the discourse and a third by the Objector that speaks first.

Meetings were held in the College and a collection was made to defray the cost of coal (six shillings and fourpence in 1772). A tone

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁴⁹ St Andrews University Library, University Muniments, UY 911, vol. i; J. H. Baxter, "The Theological Society 1760-1960", in *St Mary's College Bulletin*, iii (1961), 11-18; H. R. Sefton, "Our Oldest Society", in *College Echoes*, lxxvii. pt. 3 (1956), 8-10.

of high seriousness was expected at ordinary meetings—a member was expelled *sine spe redeundi* in 1771 “on account of some conceited speeches of his meant to reflect contempt upon the Club”—but from 1769 it became customary to conclude the session’s activities with a supper at a local hostelry. In 1775, however, four members absented them from the supper “whether from a desire to throw contempt upon the Club or merely from a principle of avarice is only known to themselves”. The minute for 14 April 1776 reads: “Mr. Webster Praeses. Mr. Mylne gave the discourse. On: Is ridicule a proper test of truth? Neg. It was debated whether the Club should break up with a genteel supper in the town or with a bottle of rum in the Hall when the latter was agreed to by a majority of one.”⁵⁰

The eighteenth century was a period of decline for the University and St Salvator’s and St Leonard’s found it necessary to unite in 1747. Careful management of its resources enabled St Mary’s to continue its separate existence.

2 The Hill Regime

The Hill regime almost began in St Mary’s College in 1779. The chancellor of the university, the Earl of Kinnoull, suggested that his protegee, George Hill, should succeed Andrew Shaw as Professor of Divinity. Hill was the son of a former minister of the Town Kirk of St Andrews and had been Professor of Greek in the United College since 1772. Still only twenty-nine, Hill wrote to Kinnoull:

Though fond of theological studies and resolved to devote myself to them, I have not, in the course of my short and busy life, had leisure to prosecute them far. . . . I am convinced that, whatever exertions I might make not to disgrace your Lordship’s nomination it will be more for the credit of the College, and the interest of the students, that a venerable and well-informed clergyman, who although advanced in life is in perfect vigour, and full possession of his faculties, should be called to impart the fruits of his experience and investigation, while I am training to succeed him.⁵¹

Accordingly, sixty-five year old minister of Wemyss, Harry Spens, was presented to the Divinity chair while Principal Murison was succeeded by the fifty-seven year old minister of the First Charge of St Andrews, James Gillespie. The minister of the Second Charge was translated to the First, and Hill became minister of the

⁵⁰ University Muniments, UY 911, vol. i.

⁵¹ George Cook, *Life of Principal Hill* (Edinburgh, 1820), 211-13.

Second Charge, while retaining the chair of Greek. This plurality of offices was opposed by a member of the Presbytery of St Andrews but was upheld on appeal by the General Assembly.⁵² Hill continued to hold his pastoral charge when he succeeded Spens as Professor of Divinity in 1788 and again in 1791 when he became Principal of St Mary's on the death of Gillespie.⁵³ Hill's nephew, George Cook, is at pains to point out that these moves were not always to his uncle's financial advantage. "The Professorship of Greek, from the number of students that attend the class, is one of the best livings in the University,—the Professorship of Divinity, it is to be regretted is one of the worst."⁵⁴ But when it was suggested in 1799 that Hill should succeed his uncle, Joseph McCormick, as Principal of the United College, he wrote to the Chancellor of the University, Viscount Melville, in these terms: "I could not afford to give up my office as Principal and my charge as second minister of the town to succeed Dr McCormick, both as Principal and Minister of St Leonards, because I should be a considerable loser".⁵⁵

The Hill regime was by then well established in the whole university and there is a tradition that the most popular psalm in St Andrews at this period was the 121st. Certainly one could lift up one's eyes to the Hills in many places.⁵⁶ George Hill's half-brother, John, was Professor of Humanity in the United College 1773-75 and his younger brother, Henry David, succeeded him as Professor of Greek. His sister Janet married John Cook, Professor of Humanity 1769-73 and Professor of Moral Philosophy 1773-1815. Their son, also John, became Professor of Hebrew at St Mary's in 1802 and Professor of Divinity in 1808. The family influence extended to the parishes whose patronage was vested in the Colleges. The United College presented John Cook II to Kilmany in 1792 and his brother, George, was presented by St Mary's College to Laurencekirk in 1795.⁵⁷ It is significant that George Cook felt it appropriate to give a full account of the circumstances of his settlement and to emphasise that he was presented not only by his uncle but by all the Masters of the College.⁵⁸ It is equally significant that George's candidature for the Chair of Ecclesiastical History in 1820 was dismissed by the

⁵² *Ibid.*, 82f.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 215, 236.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 238f.

⁵⁶ At one point six of the thirteen members of the University Senate were members of the family. R. G. Cant, *The University of St Andrews* (Edinburgh, 1970), 98-100; E. Rodger, *The Descendants of George Hill*.

⁵⁷ *Fasti*, v, 162, 477.

⁵⁸ Cook, *Principal Hill*, 243ff.

Lord Advocate on the grounds that it was not proper to have two brothers in a college of only four.⁵⁹

The Hill regime extended beyond St Andrews to the other universities⁶⁰ and in a sense to the Church of Scotland for, after the retirement of William Robertson, George Hill “managed” the General Assembly much as Viscount Melville “managed” Scotland for the Government.⁶¹ One of Hill’s most determined opponents in ecclesiastical affairs was William Laurence Brown, Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen,⁶² whose father, William Brown, had been such a doughty campaigner within St Mary’s College. Hill never enjoyed the predominance which had been Robertson’s and this may have been due, in part at least, to his residence in St Andrews, away from the ecclesiastical capital. There is evidence that communication between Hill and his “Moderate” colleagues in Edinburgh was not always close or cordial and that his advice was sometimes ignored.⁶³ Hill has been accused of being much more subservient to the state than was Robertson⁶⁴ but he could on occasion stand firm in opposing Melville. In 1800 he supported his fellow Masters at St Mary’s in refusing Melville’s demand that the reversion of a College living be made over to a political associate whom he was anxious to oblige.⁶⁵

Two years earlier, Hill had opposed Melville over the royal presentation of James Geary to the First Charge of Brechin. Geary was accused of being a “Jacobin”, a serious charge in the era of the French Revolution, but more relevantly of being “unqualified”. The “Popular” party in the Church persuaded Melville to let the presentation go forward on the grounds that the former accusation was false and the latter harsh since Geary had been educated “at some respectable seminaries in England” and had been licensed and ordained by Presbyterian dissenters there. In the debate in the Assembly of 1798, Hill “dwelt upon the injustice and hardship of imposing upon members of the church a long and expensive course of education before they could be eligible to its benefices, whilst strangers, or all who had not been previously connected with it were exempted”.⁶⁶ The Assembly supported Hill

⁵⁹ St Andrews University Library, Melville Papers, 4634.

⁶⁰ The Hill and Cook families included some thirty-six professors over a century and a half. Cant, *University of St Andrews*, 99, n. 2.

⁶¹ I. D. L. Clark, *Moderatism and the Moderate Party in the Church of Scotland 1752-1805* (Cambridge, Ph.D. thesis, 1963).

⁶² Cook, *Principal Hill*, 346f.

⁶³ Clark, *Moderatism*, 105f.

⁶⁴ W. Ferguson, *Scotland: 1689 to the Present* (Edinburgh, 1968), 225: “Under Hill Moderatism took on ugly features, becoming little more than the Dundas interest at prayer, with nepotism and pluralism the main order of service.”

⁶⁵ Clark, *Moderatism*, 163; St Andrews University Library, Melville Papers, 4788, 4790.

⁶⁶ Cook, *Principal Hill*, 172-75.

and the Moderates in finding Geary's presentation null and void. The following year the Assembly passed a stringent act debarring unqualified ministers and preachers from the pulpits of the Church.

The Act of 1799 undoubtedly reflects the worsening relations of the Church of Scotland with the other Presbyterian Churches in Scotland and its opposition to itinerant preachers like the Haldane brothers, but it is also one of a series of acts attempting to raise standards of education for the ministry. Act VIII 1782 provided that none would be admitted to trials for Licence unless he had graduated as Master of Arts or completed a full course of philosophy and had given close attendance for four years at Divinity Hall. Those whose circumstances did not permit them to give close attendance at the Hall were to study Divinity for six years.⁶⁷

It is clear that George Hill was fully in sympathy with these aims and took his duties in preparing men for the ministry very seriously. His introductory lecture to his students "dwelt upon the honourable and useful employment to which their views were directed and pointed out in the most impressive manner the effect which should be produced upon their preparation for their more immediate duties and upon the purity of their conduct".⁶⁸ We are told by Cook that he carefully abstained from biasing the minds of his students and endeavoured "to call forth their own powers to accustom them to reflect and judge, and to furnish with fidelity the materials by which they might be enabled to do so".⁶⁹ Hill's concern for accuracy led him to prepare for his students synopses of his lectures with reading lists for further study and, when he discovered that they were slow and careless in circulating and transcribing these notes, he arranged for them to be published.⁷⁰ This was particularly useful for students preparing for the Church's Licence who were not in attendance at the College.

The number of students enrolled in St Mary's during this period varies from 18 in Sessions 1804-05 to 41 in Sessions 1818-19 and 1819-20. Approximately a third of these were irregular students who were employed as private tutors or parish schoolmasters and appeared in College only when required to deliver a discourse.⁷¹ Among the irregular students was John Strachan who later became Archbishop of Upper Canada.⁷² The regular students included

⁶⁷ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 811-14, 868f.

⁶⁸ Cook, *Principal Hill*, 219.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 228-29.

⁷¹ *Evidence*, iii, 400.

⁷² University Muniments, UY 911, ii, 3.

Thomas Chalmers who completed the course prescribed by the Church before the minimum age for Licence which had been fixed as 21 in 1782. He was nonetheless taken on trials and licensed as he was said to be “a lad o’ pregnant pairts”.⁷³ Chalmers’ subsequent career did not greatly commend him to his old College but immense pride was taken in one of his fellow students, John Campbell, who rose through the ranks of the legal profession to become Lord Chancellor, first of Ireland and then of Great Britain.⁷⁴ Another fellow student was Thomas Duncan, Professor of Mathematics in the United College from 1820 to 1860 and life-long friend and confidant of Chalmers.

In later years, Duncan contributed to William Hanna’s *Memoirs of Dr Chalmers*, some reminiscences of Chalmers’ activities in the Theological Society:

This Society was composed entirely of divinity students, and met once a week in a room of the Divinity College, commonly called St. Mary’s College. The subjects discussed were of course mostly of a theological nature, or nearly connected with theology. The business of the evening commenced with the delivery of a systematic discourse on some subject prescribed to the member in the preceding session, and then succeeded the debate on some subject which had been taken out by some member at the previous meeting, and on which, when he had declared the side he intended to take, another member was appointed to assist him, and two other members to impugn, or sustain the opposite side. . . . In session 1796-7 Dr. Chalmers was engaged on the affirmative side of the question, “Is a Divine Revelation necessary?”. . . . In 1796-7, he delivered a systematic discourse on predestination. . . . This discourse is remarkable, as I remember that the subject of it occupied him intensely during that session.⁷⁵

Another reminiscence of Chalmers speaks of his first turn of duty in the Prayer Hall. His prayer was an amplification of the Lord’s Prayer but so originally and eloquently worded that general wonder and admiration was aroused. Prayers in the Hall were open to the public but few as a rule attended except when Chalmers officiated:

I remember still after the lapse of fifty-two years, writes one of his hearers, the powerful impression made by his prayers in the

⁷³ W. Hanna, *Memoirs of Dr Chalmers* (Edinburgh, 1849), i, 32f.

⁷⁴ University Muniments, UY 911, ii, 3; *Dictionary of National Biography*, viii, 379-86; J. W. Taylor, *Some Historical Antiquities, chiefly ecclesiastical, connected with St Andrews* (Cupar, 1859), 73.

⁷⁵ Hanna, *Chalmers*, i, 21.

Prayer Hall, to which the people of St Andrews flocked when they knew that Chalmers was to pray. The wonderful flow of eloquent, vivid, ardent description of the attributes and works of God, and still more perhaps, the astonishingly narrowing delineation of the miseries, the horrid cruelties, immoralities and abominations inseparable from war which always came in more or less in connexion with the bloody warfare in which we were engaged with France, called forth the wonderment of his hearers. He was then only sixteen years of age, yet he showed a taste and capacity for composition of the most glowing and eloquent kind.⁷⁶

The inflation caused by the war with France caused the Principal and Masters some concern. In 1800 they noted that “in consequence of the late very great rise in the price of provisions” the value of their Diet-money had fallen and so they resolved “that instead of the whole allowance for diet being paid in money, a considerable part of it shall, in all time coming, consist of a certain number of bolls of victual, out of the victual payable to the College, the value of which part will rise or fall in proportion to the price of the necessaries of life”.⁷⁷ The cost of the College table was also the subject of discussion in the early years of the nineteenth century. The expenses of the table including butchers’, bakers’ and brewers’ accounts, coals and the wages of the servants amounted to £84 11s 9½d for session 1806-07 but rose to £115 8s 11d for session 1813-14. A minute dated 11 October 1814 makes a comparison between the actual expenses and the cost of paying each bursar his entitlement in cash and concludes that the latter would have been cheaper. Accordingly, the Principal and Masters resolved “to make the experiment of abolishing the College table . . . and to pay to every one of the foundation bursars who may be elected by them, and to the bursar who may be presented by the family of Moncrieffe, two bolls of wheat, five bolls of bear [i.e. barley] and two of oats and £1 17s 2⅘₁₂d; the victual to be converted every session at the Fife fiar prices for the crop immediately preceding”.⁷⁸ This effectively meant the end of St Mary’s as a residential college.

In a memorial dated 31 October 1814 and addressed to the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty’s Treasury, Hill and his colleagues claimed that St Mary’s was the only academic institution in Britain appropriated to the study of Theology. They reported that they “deliver lectures in the several branches of Sacred

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷⁷ *Evidence*, iii, 376.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 395, College Minutes, SM 400, iii, 315-18.

Literature and superintend the education of candidates for the office of the Ministry in the established Church". But the main object of the memorial was to draw the attention of the Commissioners to the financial plight of the College, caused by much of its endowment being in the form of teinds. Despite an Act of Parliament of 1587 ordaining "that the said College be free in all time coming from paying any part of stipend to any minister or reader serving at the kirks", St Mary's having been considered as a constituent part of the national Church, the College had suffered since 1794 a loss of revenue to the extent of £481 8s 5d sterling per annum in consequence of the augmentation of stipends payable from the teinds of the parishes with which it had been endowed. The four Masters of the College had not only had to accept reductions in their stipends but had also "the yearly increasing cost of supporting a large and decaying fabric" and "the maintenance of nine Bursars, at an expense equal to what was required when the revenue was unimpaired". The consequence of all this was that the stipends of the Masters of the College now compared very unfavourably with the stipends of parish ministers. The three Masters who had formerly been ministers of the Church of Scotland were now receiving from their offices in the College nearly £100 less than the current stipends of the livings they had resigned. Hill himself was better off than his colleagues, for he had his official residence in the College and since 1808 had been Minister of the First Charge of St Andrews. The other Masters rented houses in the town at rents of between £50 and £60 annually. The conclusion drawn was that "a Royal Institution endowed for the purpose of completing the theological education of Intrants for the Church far from holding forth any inducement to men of talents to undertake this important charge has become a situation into which no man with a family possessing no other means of subsistence can afford to enter".⁷⁹

Presumably it was financial considerations and not educational policy that dictated the transference of Masters from one chair to another during this period. We have seen that Hill's nephew, John Cook, was translated from the Hebrew chair to Divinity in 1808 but his two predecessors in the Hebrew chair, Charles Wilson and John Trotter, were successively translated to the better endowed chair of Ecclesiastical History. Charles Wilson also served as Factor to the College and was succeeded in this office by John Cook.⁸⁰ Cook's successor in the Hebrew chair, Daniel Robertson, seems to have been a man of unusual parts for in 1810 he let it be known that he

⁷⁹ College Muniments, SM 1105/6f.

⁸⁰ College Minutes, SM 400, iii, 232-34.

was prepared to give instruction in Persian.⁸¹ The most distinguished of Hill's colleagues was John Lee, who succeeded Trotter as Professor of Ecclesiastical History in 1812. Lee was a man of vast and varied learning whose first publication was *De viribus animi in corpus agentibus* which earned him the degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1801 from Edinburgh. He practised medicine in the army and studied law before ministering in London and Peebles. During part of his time at St Andrews he was also Professor of Moral Philosophy at King's College, Aberdeen, where his lectures were delivered by proxy. An antiquarian of no mean order, Lee's collections are a valuable source of information about the history of the University. After leaving St Andrews he ministered in Edinburgh and was later Principal of the University there.⁸²

It is easy to criticise the Hill regime but it would be wrong to dismiss it as merely an era of nepotism and pluralism. When he became Principal, Hill wrote to Melville assuring him that he would make every exertion in his power "to maintain the credit, and to preserve the peace, of St Mary's College".⁸³ There is no reason to suppose that he did not do so, according to his lights. George Cook's account of his labours is undoubtedly favourable but there are perhaps reluctant tributes from other sources to his ability as a theologian and teacher. Hugh Miller, no friend of the Moderates, concedes: "His work is that of a masterly theologian, who at least saw clearly, though he could not feel strongly".⁸⁴ In more recent times Principal John Macleod has described Hill's lectures as "definitely and ably Calvinistic".⁸⁵ But perhaps it was his former student Chalmers who rendered him the most significant tribute of using the posthumously published *Lectures in Divinity* as a text book in his classes in the new Free Church College in Edinburgh.⁸⁶

⁸¹ St Andrews University Library, Melville Papers, 4492.

⁸² A. Grant, *The Story of the University of Edinburgh* (London, 1884), ii, 271-74; *Dictionary of National Biography*, xi, 802f.

⁸³ Cook, *Principal Hill*, 238.

⁸⁴ H. Miller, *The Headship of Christ and the Rights of the Christian People* (Edinburgh, 1869), 140.

⁸⁵ J. Macleod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh, 1974), 208.

⁸⁶ H. Watt, *Thomas Chalmers and the Disruption* (Edinburgh, 1943), 333.

PROFESSORS OF ST MARY'S COLLEGE, ST ANDREWS

<i>Principal</i>	<i>Divinity</i>		<i>Eccl. History</i>	<i>Hebrew</i>
James Lorimer	1687-1690			
William Vilant	1691-1693			
Alexander Pitcairn	1693-1695			
Thomas Forester	1698-1706	James Hadow	1699-1707	John Syme
James Hadow	1707-1747	Thomas Halyburton	1710-1712	1695-1718
		Alexander Scrimgeour	1713-1732	Gabriel Johnstone
		Thomas Tullideph	1734-1739	1707-1718
				1718-1727
		Andrew Shaw	1739-1779	Archibald Campbell
				1730-1756
				Hugh Warrender
				1728-1738
				Thomas Craigie
				1741-1746
				George Hadow
				1748-1780
James Murison	1747-1779		William Brown	1757-1791
James Gillespie	1779-1791	Harry Spens	1779-1788	Charles Wilson
		George Hill	1788-1791	1780-1793
				John Trotter
George Hill	1791-1819	Robert Arnot	1791-1808	1794-1802
		John Cook	1808-1824	John Cook
				1802-1808
			John Lee	Daniel Robertson
				1812-1823
				1808-1817
				George Buist
				1817-1823

HULLS AND COOKS

